



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maryland
Northern Division*

*Thomas M. DiBiagio
United States Attorney*

*Vickie E. LeDuc
Public Information Officer*

*6625 United States Courthouse
101 West Lombard Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2692*

*410-209-4800
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462
410-209-4885
FAX 410-962-3091
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov*

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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:
VICKIE E. LEDUC, AUSA
(410) 209-4885**

BALTIMORE MAN CONVICTED OF ARMED BANK ROBBERIES

Baltimore, Maryland - United States Attorney Thomas M. DiBiagio announced today that after a six day trial before U.S. District Judge William Quarles, a federal jury convicted Billy Campbell Harding, age 26, of Baltimore, Maryland, yesterday of conspiracy to commit armed bank robbery, four armed bank robberies, one attempted armed bank robbery, and four counts of use of a firearm during a crime of violence.

Following a lengthy investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Harding was indicted and arrested on August 22, 2002. The charges arose as a result of Harding's involvement with co-defendants Donte Rolando Harris, age 30, of Baltimore, Maryland; Juan Deonte Dixon, age 31, of Randallstown, Maryland; Allistar Guerra, age 21, of Gaithersburg, Maryland; Talina Bell, age 24, at Baltimore, Maryland; and Sherone Barnes, age 40, of Waldorf, Maryland, in a string of bank robberies or attempted bank robberies throughout the region from January to July 2002. All of the co-defendants have pled guilty.

According to trial testimony, Harding and his male co-conspirators initially followed bank employees to their homes after the bank branches closed for business. Brandishing either a

Mossburg shotgun or a .9 mm pistol, the defendants would mace, kidnap, torture and/or drive them around in a stolen get-away car, thereby forcing them to give up information to gain access to the employee's bank, retrieve the money or go into the bank themselves and steal the money.

After this method began to fail, two or three of the men would enter the bank with either a .9 mm automatic pistol or pellet guns, while Harding parked the getaway vehicle (usually a stolen car or van) at the drive-thru window. One girlfriend provided inside information about a bank in which she had worked as a teller and another occasionally served as a get-away driver after Harding and the others abandoned the stolen get-away vehicle.

Harding was convicted of the following attempted/bank robberies: First Federal Financial Credit Union, 6400 Baltimore, MD., \$18,449 on January 11, 2002; Old Line National Bank, 15808 Livingston Rd., Accokeek, MD., \$8,550 on March 11, 2002; Key Bank & Trust, 8601 Liberty Rd., Randallstown, Maryland, attempted on May 24, 2002; Farmer's Bank of Maryland, 200 Hospital Dr., Glen Burnie, MD \$28,563 on June 22, 2002; and Key Bank & Trust, 9450 Baltimore National Pike, Ellicott City, MD., \$5,035 on July 29, 2002. Harding was also convicted for use of a firearm during the commission of four of these attempted/bank robberies.

Mr. Harding faces a maximum sentence of approximately 100 years in prison for the armed bank robberies and attempted armed bank robbery; 25 years in prison for the bank robbery, followed by a minimum mandatory sentence of 82 years in prison for the use of a firearm convictions. Judge Quarles has scheduled sentencing for August 28, 2003.

This case is a result of an investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys James G. Warwick and Steven H. Levin.